

DENMARK.

Mr. Seward to Mr. Wood.

[Extract.]

No. 2.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, May 1, 1861.

SIR: The one subject in all our foreign relations which most anxiously engages the President's attention is the possible action of other nations in regard to the domestic controversy which is raging within our own borders.

Parties long ago found it their apparent interest to appeal to local interests and prejudices, and they have persevered in that policy so far and with such effect that masses large enough to control the action of the State authorities have at last come to prefer disorganization and disunion, rather than to acquiesce in the will of the majority expressed in conformity with the provisions of the organic law.

To a well-balanced mind it seems very strange that a citizen, ever without the excuse of intolerable oppression, passes the first stage of sedition, for it is at that very stage that the malcontent finds himself obliged to seek aid from aliens to defeat the equal laws and overthrow the beneficent institutions of his own country. Sedition in the United States is not merely unreasonable, it is altogether absurd. Human ingenuity has never yet devised, nor can it devise, a form of government in which the individual citizen can retain so large a portion of the natural rights of man, and at the same time receive so ample a protection against the dangers which so often threaten the safety and even the existence of nations. Nevertheless, an insurrection has broken out here; a pretended government has been constituted under the name of the Confederate States of America, and that government now has its agents abroad seeking to obtain a recognition of its sovereignty and independence.

It is hardly to be supposed that these agents will visit the capital of Denmark. They will seek the favor of powers supposed to be more capricious or more ambitious. Nevertheless political action even of the more commanding or more active States is influenced by a general opinion that is formed imperceptibly in all parts of the Eastern continent. Every representative of the United States in Europe has, therefore, a responsibility to see that no effort on his part is wanting to make that opinion just, so far as the true position of affairs in his own country is concerned.

It cannot be necessary to discuss at large the merits of the unhappy controversy. It is sufficient to speak of its nature and its probable result. The insurrection strikes at the heart of the nation. The country, so long accustomed to profound tranquillity and universal loyalty, was slow to believe that a parricidal purpose could be contemplated where it felt satisfied there was no just cause for serious discontent. Our government is at once a purely representative and simply federal one.

While the insurrection was gathering, the administration was practically paralyzed by the presence, in a very large proportion, of the plotters and abettors of the movement, in what, in Europe, would be called the ministry, in the legislative, in the army, in the navy, in the customs, in the post office, in the diplomatic and consular representations abroad.

Seventy years of almost unbroken peace had brought agriculture, mining, manufactures, and trade to the highest possible state of activity, and the people shrunk intuitively from a change of that peaceful activity, for not merely war, but needless and ruinous civil war, which even threatens to take on the revolting character of servile war.

The insurgents skilfully availed themselves of these doubts and fears, and by a course of affected moderation increased them. It seemed as if the nation would fall into ruins without even putting forth an effort to preserve its integrity. You could not, therefore, have been surprised at finding on your arrival in Europe that the same impression had obtained there, and that the Union of these States was assumed, in European circles, to be practically at an end. For a time loyal citizens occupied themselves with trying how, by compromise, to avert a civil war, rather than to accept as inevitable an event so unnatural and so fearful.

The crisis, however, came at last, a few days after your departure from the country. The insurgents, with the force gathered through immense preparations around a fortress in their own locality, opened a terrible fire upon it, to prevent the handful of men, which constituted the garrison, from receiving supplies when on the verge of famine, and continued the cannonade, though the barracks were in flames, and the brave men, thus imperilled, were obliged to abandon defence against assault to save themselves from destruction in another form. The defending force consented to a capitulation dishonorable only to their assailants.

This last and most violent pressure reached at once the very centre where the elastic force of the national spirit lay concealed. The government accepted the issue of civil war, and sent forth its appeal to the patriotism of the people. Never in any age or country was such an appeal responded to with so much promptness, enthusiasm, and resolution; and certainly never did any nation disclose and offer up at once such exhaustless resources for its self-preservation.

The revolution already is upon the recoil. Its failure is certain. All that remains is to see what shall be the measure of the disasters and calamities, affecting chiefly the insurgents themselves, which are to be endured before they consent to a restoration of peace, and to guarantee the inviolability of the Union.

Friendly nations may for a little time, perhaps, suffer some inconvenience from the blockade of the ports of the insurgent States, which this government has found it necessary to set on foot, as they will justly take alarm at the announcement that the revolutionary party have proclaimed their purpose to employ privateers to prey upon the commerce of the country. But the embarrassments attending the first measure will be mitigated by the strictness and efficiency with which it will be enforced, and it will not be maintained a day longer than is necessary. Our naval arm is already strong, and it will promptly be made stronger, so that the other evil will be, as we trust, effectually prevented.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

BRADFORD R. WOOD, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Seward to Mr. Wood.

No. 3.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, May 6, 1861.

SIR: Herewith I transmit a copy of a despatch of the 24th ultimo, which has been addressed to the several ministers of the United States accredited to the maritime powers whose plenipotentiaries composed the congress at Paris of the 16th of April, 1856, calling their attention to the importance of endeavoring to negotiate with those powers conventions upon the subject of the rights of belligerents and neutrals in time of war. The government of Denmark was not represented in the Paris congress; but the negotiation of a similar convention with that government is considered desirable, and you will therefore be governed by the instruction of which I enclose a transcript, and endeavor to effect that object. With this view I herewith send you a full power and a draft of the proposed convention.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

BRADFORD R. WOOD, Esq., &c., &c., &c., *Copenhagen.**Mr. Wood to Mr. Seward.*

No. 2.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, July 11, 1861.

SIR: I have the honor to inform the department that, immediately on the return of Mr. Hall, the minister of foreign affairs, from Jutland, and by his request, I met him on the 10th instant. His reception was frank and cordial, and while he alluded to the opinions held by my predecessor as different from mine, he expressed himself decidedly in favor of the administration and against the so-called confederates. He also informed me that the King would not return to Copenhagen before the last of this month or the beginning of next.

I have the honor to remain your obedient servant,

BRADFORD R. WOOD.

HON. WILLIAM H. SEWARD,
*Secretary of State.**Mr. Wood to Mr. Seward.*

No. 4.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,
Copenhagen, July 19, 1861.

SIR: I have the honor to inform the department that, in an interview yesterday with the president of the council and minister of state, Mr. Hall, he readily acceded to the doctrine of the Paris convention in regard to privateering, though reluctant, in the present state of European affairs, to adopt the position of your predecessor, Mr. Marcy. He mentioned the fact that a

Danish man-of-war had been sent to the West Indies for the purpose of preventing privateering and preserving the neutrality of Denmark.

The King is still absent, in Jutland, and my reception as the representative of my government by the minister of state, without the formality of a presentation to the King, should be considered a compliment to that government.

I have the honor to remain your obedient servant,

BRADFORD R. WOOD.

HON. WILLIAM H. SEWARD,
Secretary of State.

Mr. Seward to Mr. Wood.

No. 6.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, August 1, 1861.

SIR: Your despatch of the 11th of July last has been received, and the President instructs me to say that the explanation of the views of the Danish government given to you by Mr. Hall, the minister for foreign affairs, is very satisfactory.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

BRADFORD R. WOOD, Esq., &c., &c., &c., *Copenhagen.*

Mr. Seward to Mr. Wood.

No. 8.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, August 22, 1861.

SIR: Your despatches to No. 5, of the 26th ultimo, have been received.

From your No. 4 I learn, with much satisfaction, that the Danish government adopts and practices the declaration of the congress of Paris, and I trust that nothing is likely to occur to produce any inconvenience affecting the commerce with Denmark, a power with which we have every desire to cultivate the most intimate relations.

Your admission by the minister to the duties of your mission under the circumstances of the absence of his Majesty is accepted by us as a proof of the friendly feelings of the government, deserving of especial acknowledgment.

The information given in your No. 5, on the subject of the purchase in Europe of clothing and arms for the United States, has been communicated to the Secretary of War.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

BRADFORD R. WOOD, Esq., &c., &c., &c., *Copenhagen.*

Mr. Seward to Mr. Wood.

No. 9.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, September 5, 1861.

SIR: Your despatch of August 15 (No. 9) has been received.

The affair of the place of deposit for papers of Danish vessels, to which you direct my attention, has been already settled in a manner which will, I am sure, be entirely satisfactory to the government of Denmark.

I can well understand the depression you experienced on hearing of the reverse of our arms at Bull Run, and the unfavorable comments on our course which this misfortune elicits in Europe. There is, however, no occasion for apprehension of an unfavorable issue of the present civil contest.

Whatever speculations on the subject may be made at home or abroad, you may be assured that it is not in our day that treason is to prevail against the government in our country, based as it is on the rights of man and his capacity for self-government.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

BRADFORD R. WOOD, Esq., &c., &c., &c., *Copenhagen.*